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ABSTRACT

This practicum report was designed to enhance supervision of social work through the development and utilization of a resource directory. A pilot agency, located in an ethnically diverse, metropolitan community, was provided the directory in an attempt to positively influence the implementation of the supervision recommendations. The agency then evaluated, by survey, the directory's usefulness and monitored changes in practice that occurred as a result of the directory. These surveys suggested that the agency staff found supervision recommendations to be useful, but they struggled with implementing the recommendations into individual cases and the overall practice of the agency. The report is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction, describing the community in which the pilot agency was located, the work setting, and the role of the author. Chapter 2 discusses the problem statement: the public children's service agency implementing the resource guide had not been provided with consistent supervision recommendations regarding child abuse and/or neglect risk assessment. Also included in this chapter is a review of literature. Chapter 3 discusses the anticipated outcomes of the study. For instance, it was expected that 12 out of 15 risk-assessment supervision recommendations to the agency would be consistent as determined by a case supervision record review. Chapter 4 discusses the strategies used to make supervision recommendations more consistent; and chapter 5 discusses the results, including which of the projected outcomes were met and which were not. Includes four appendices: (1) Improving Technical Assistance Recommendations; (2) Supervision Recommendation Documentation; (3) Supervision Recommendations Survey; and (4) Post Implementation Improving Technical Assistance Recommendations: Colleague Input Survey. Contains 18 references. (JMD)

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ED 426 467

Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Resource Directory to Enhance Consistency in Risk Assessment Supervision Recommendations

by
Nancy M. Harvey
Cluster 85

A Practicum Report Presented to
the Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University
1998

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Table of Contents

Page

Abstract v

Chapter I: Introduction 1
- Description of Community 1
- Writer's Work Setting 1
- Writer's Role 5

Chapter II: Study of the Problem 8
- Problem Statement 8
- Problem Description 8
- Problem Documentation 13
- Causative Analysis 21
- Relationship in the Problem to the Literature 27

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments 32
- Goals and Expectations 32
- Expected Outcomes 32
- Measurement of Outcomes 34

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy 37
- Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions 37
- Description of Selected Solutions 40
- Report of Action Taken 44

Chapter V: Results 47
- Results 47
- Discussion 50
- Recommendations 52
- Dissemination 53

References 54

Appendices
- A Improving Technical Assistance Recommendations 56
- B Supervision Recommendation Documentation 58
- C Supervision Recommendations Survey 60
- D Post Implementation Improving Technical Assistance Recommendations Colleague Input Survey 62

Tables

1 Four County Summary Child Fatality Reviews....14
2 Four County Summary Constituent Complaints....16
3 Four County Summary Agency Visits....18
4 Four County Summary Telephone Consultation....20
5 Improving Technical Assistance Recommendations Survey Results....22
6 Supervision Recommendations Summary....48

Abstract

Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Resource Directory to Enhance Risk Assessment Supervision Recommendations Harvey, Nancy M., 1998: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. (Child and Youth Services Administration/ Child Abuse and Neglect/ Supervision)

This practicum was designed to enhance the consistency of the social work supervision recommendations through the development and utilization of a resource directory. Information on practice techniques was collected to develop a resource directory to enhance the social work practice recommendations provided to the agencies.

The resource directory was utilized to provide concrete information to support the supervision recommendations. The pilot agency was provided the information in an attempt to positively influence the implementation of the supervision recommendations. The agency of implementation then evaluated, by a survey, the usefulness and changes in practice that occurred as a result of the utilization of the practice resource directory.

The results of the survey indicated that the agency staff believed that the supervision recommendations were helpful, but struggled with implementing the recommendations into individual cases or the overall practice of the agency.

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Chapter I : Introduction

Description of Community

The community in which the practicum took place was located in a large city in the Midwestern United States. The community was a large metropolitan community located within a predominately rural area. The metropolitan community was very ethnically diverse, but the rural areas tended to be ethnically homogenous. The community had a stable socioeconomic situation, but relied heavily on skilled machining trades and the automotive industry to support the economic base of the community. The community had attracted several universities to support higher education, but the work force was primarily skilled trades. The community enjoyed a fairly low unemployment rate, but was extremely dependent upon the machining and automotive industry need for continued manual labor.

In general, the community valued families, heritage, and traditions, but particularly believed in the privacy of families and the need for families to be self sufficient. This was evidenced by the difficulty in the community supporting tax levies for public child and family social service agencies, but readily donating money to maintain the ethnic community parks, heritage festivals, etc. This was also evident by a very large and active VOCAL (Victims of Child Abuse Laws) association. Therefore, the practicum occurred in a community where a portion of families did not believe in public intervention into family life.

Writer's Work Setting

The problem was occurring in a very large federal and state funded organization. The mission of the agency was:

> to provide leadership to assure that public assistance, social service and health

> programs are administered in a manner that recognizes and preserves individual rights, responsibilities and dignity so that families, children and adults are able to restore, maintain or improve their capabilities for self support and family life (www.state.oh.us/odhs/odhsmssn.html).

The organization indicated that in order to achieve the mission that the organization needed to:

- Develop and coordinate policy and procedures;
- Secure and distribute funding to county agencies and health care providers;
- Provide administrative support and technical assistance to county human service agencies and other customers;
- Monitor and evaluate program performance;
- Assure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements

(www.state.oh.us/odhs/odhsmssn.html).

The organization was unique because of the multiple mandated services and the agency structure. The organization was also unique because it delegated the delivery of direct services to an agency in each county within the state, but the state remained a modified supervisory agency.

The organization was divided into five districts and one central office. The division of the organization placed the major focus of policy development and involvement with the federal office as responsibilities of the central office. Therefore, the responsibility for direct interaction and service to the county agencies rested with the district office. However, as with many organizations, tension and conflicts existed between the central

office and the district office staff over roles and responsibilities. In fact, the organization held numerous "retreats" to address the issues between the two bureaus.

The organization was responsible for the policy development and supervision of the county agencies that administered the direct service delivery. The organization, due to receiving both state and federal funds, was required to meet the mandates of each entity while trying to recognize individual county agency autonomy.

The county agency staff administered the client services and was responsible for the direct supervision of staff. The state agency did not have a line of authority with county agency personnel. The state supervisory agency's primary function was insuring the county agency staff were complying with state and federal regulations. The county agency staff could decide not to follow the state supervisory agency's recommendations, but risk fiscal consequences, as the state or federal government could withhold funding as a sanction.

The organization had several social and cultural factors that influenced the system. One factor that directly influenced the organization was changes due to the election of governors and key political people. Changes in political leadership at the state level resulted in political appointees being appointed to leadership position within the organization. The political appointees served at the pleasure of the party that appointed them, and usually entered and left the organization with changes in political leadership. This created a situation where key leadership positions within the organization were filled by appointees that usually left the agency approximately every three to four years. Therefore, there tended to be a lack of continuity in the ongoing mission, vision, and direction of the organization, contingent upon the current political party in power.

Another factor that influenced the culture of the organization involved an early retirement program. The organization had offered an early retirement package that allowed employees with 24 years or more of public service to leave the organization with full retirement benefits. Employees that were eligible for the program could leave at any time before February of 1999.

This factor created a situation where the majority of highly experienced staff were taking the buyout program, creating constant flux in the top administration. The change in the administration caused changes in the focus and direction of services under each administrator. Additionally, this caused changes in job duties, position abolishment, structural changes, transfers and relocations, etc. Specifically, to evidence the change, the writer's unit had been under three different divisions and administrators within a two month period of time, just prior to the implementation period. Employees of the organization were unsure of what their job duties would be, where they would be working, and/or if their positions would be abolished. This constant change had definite implications on the culture of the organization creating a highly competitive self preservation focused culture.

Another factor that affected the social and culture of the organization was welfare reform. Due to required federal statue changes, the agency was in a state of constant fluctuation to come into compliance with the federal reforms. In order to achieve federally mandated compliance, several changes were occurring within the organization. The changes related to children's services included that children's services would become incorporated under the welfare reform program. The goal was that children's services and the public assistance program would work in conjunction to promote the mission of the

agency and the success of the welfare reform initiative. This change resulted in what some believed was the deprofessionalism of the child welfare services.

Traditionally, employees within the public assistance programs had been required to have a high school education as a minimum qualification; Whereas, the social service staff were required to have a bachelors degree. With the new welfare reform initiative, the public assistance and social service staff were to work as an equal team to serve county agencies. The merging of the sections created teams led by supervisors without social service experience or formal education. Several factions within the organization were opposed to allowing staff, who were not formally trained in social work, to make social work and children's services decisions or to supervise social service employees. Therefore, the organization had several units or factions that tended to be resistive to the plan for welfare reform.

The self preservation and generally skeptical environment created a dilemma for the practicum. Ideally, the writer had hoped to be able to have all the district staff participate in the practicum intervention. However, in the work environment that was not feasible. However, some staff expressed interest in the practicum intervention, but indicated that they would rather wait to determine if it was helpful to the county agencies and when they had achieved some resolution regarding their employment status. Consequently, the writer determined, within the existing organizational environment at the time of implementation, that the best course of action was to complete the practicum intervention without reliance on other parties within the organization to meet the outcomes.

Writer's Role

The writer had multiple roles and responsibilities within the organization, but

limited the discussion to those that related to the practicum experience. Furthermore, the writer's roles and responsibilities were constantly changing within the reorganization of the agency. The writer was responsible for providing social work supervision to three county agencies. The writer was not involved in the routine supervision of services provided by the county agency. The writer was responsible for providing case specific and program evaluation of the services provided to clients by the county agency. The writer was available for consultation in difficult cases and ongoing evaluative feedback regarding the provision of services to children and families.

As a result of various evaluative reviews, the writer made recommendations to the county agency for areas for improvement. The writer was responsible for ongoing consultative assistance to county agencies to promote the likelihood of following the writer's recommendations and improving services to children and families. The agencies were not required to follow any of the recommendations of the writer. However, the writer's functions were a precursor to a change in the relationship with the county agencies.

In the near future, county agency's ongoing funding would be contingent on their achievement of selected outcomes developed in a partnership agreement between the county agency and the state agency. At that time, the writer would provide services to the county agencies to support their achievement of their goals and provide evaluative feedback to the state agency. However, currently, the writer was only providing the services and feedback without any repercussions to the county agencies for not following the recommendations.

The writer was an external reviewer of the agency's provision of services, and the three county agencies were responsible for making decisions regarding all personnel

actions. The writer was not held accountable if the agency did not follow the recommendations. The writer was responsible for making recommendations, advising county agencies, and forwarding the recommendations to the administration for monthly reports.

Chapter II: Study of the Problem

Problem Statement

The problem to be solved in the this practicum was that the county agencies, responsible for the administration of legally mandated child protective services, were not being provided consistent social work supervision recommendations regarding child abuse and/or neglect risk assessments/ investigations by the state supervisory agency.

Problem Description

The county public children's service agency responsible for the investigation of child abuse and neglect investigations, through the utilization of risk assessment, had not been provided with consistent supervision recommendations to facilitate the implementation of risk assessment. The writer's state recently passed legislation that mandated the implementation of risk assessment in child abuse and neglect investigations. Risk assessment is a structured assessment of a family's strengths and weaknesses that first occurs during the initial investigation of child abuse and/or neglect. Risk assessment is a focus on predicting the likelihood of future maltreatment by thoroughly assessing family strengths and concerns, and appropriately targeting service intervention.

The risk assessment structured strengths and weaknesses are factors that research has indicated are frequently correlated with child abuse and/or neglect. These factors include information regarding child and adult characteristics, and frequency and chronicity of the child abuse and/or neglect.

Specifically, risk assessment addresses the child's history of child abuse and/or neglect. The factors that are considered are the extent of injury to the child, extent of emotional harm, adequacy of medical care, securement of basic needs, adequacy of supervision, physical hazards in the home, sexual abuse, dangerous acts, and the frequency of the above factors. These factors represent the child's history of child abuse and/ or neglect, and represent a summary of the most serious incidents in each factor. This information is collected on all children within the home being investigated.

Following the collection of the history of child abuse and/or neglect, the child is assigned a baseline rating representing the highest level of risk that the child has ever been exposed to during his/her life. A child is assigned the ratings of no risk, low risk, moderate risk, or high risk. This rate is decided based upon utilizing a handbook, called the Risk Assessment Field Guide (Ohio Department of Human Services, 1997.), which outlines what physical injuries would be low to high risk, what constitutes low to high risk in extent of emotional harm, etc. For all of the factors in the risk assessment, the field guide provides specific examples of no, low, moderate, and high risk situations, and suggested questions to be asked of the caretakers and children to elicit this information.

After the child's baseline history has been collected, then the factors that represent changeable attributes are collected. These include characteristics of the child and the adult caretakers. Specifically, the child characteristics include the following factors that with time or intervention could decrease or increase the likelihood of future maltreatment of the child: age of child, physical, intellectual and social development of the child, behavioral problems of the child, self protection of the child, and the child's role in the family.

These factors, when weaknesses exist in these areas, have been correlated to an increased risk of future maltreatment of the child. These factors, when strengths exist, have been linked to a decrease in the likelihood of maltreatment to the child. For instance, children that are delayed physically, intellectual, and socially are at a greatly likelihood of future maltreatment.

Next, the characteristics of the adults in the household are examined. The information collected for the adult characteristics include the following: history of victimization of other children, history of assaultive behavior towards adults, history of child abuse or neglect as a child, substance abuse, intellectual, physical, or psychological impairments, parenting skills, coping ability, protection of the child, adult's response to stress, response to the child's behavior, attachment/bonding issues, social connectedness of the adults, family resources, and alleged perpetrator access.

The factors are assessed to determine the likelihood of future child abuse or neglect incidents. The assessment is to be utilized to determine the appropriate level of intervention to adequately protect the child. The county public children's service agency is required by statute to start implementing risk assessment in every child abuse and neglect investigation starting January 1, 1998.

The writer had not consistently provided supervision recommendations to the county agencies to facilitate the successful implementation of risk assessment. Consistent supervision was operationally defined as providing supervision recommendations that address both administrative code (legal) compliance and practice considerations.

An administrative code recommendation was operationally defined as a recommendation that was directly indicated in the state administrative code governing child

abuse and/or neglect risk assessments. The Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines practice as "the continuous exercise of a profession" p.923. Sheafor, Horejsi, and Horejsi (1994) stated that "In reality, practice is a set of actions and behaviors by the social worker" (p. xi). Furthermore, they define practice as "the process of using knowledge and applying theory in order to bring about specific types of change." (p. 42). Ohio Revised Code 4757.01 indicates that the

> (C) 'practice of social work' means the application of specialized knowledge of human development and behavior and social, economic, and cultural systems in directly assisting individuals, families, and groups in a clinical setting to improve or restore their capacity for social functioning, including counseling, the use of psychosocial interventions, and the use of psychotherapy, which includes the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders.

Consequently, a practice recommendation was operationally defined as a recommendation that would fit within the above definitions of practice.

Supervision recommendations were operationally defined as all recommendations involving child fatality reviews, constituent complaints, monthly visits, and telephone consultation that were documented and become a formal part of the agency supervision record. This operational definition would allow for the maintenance of individual recommendations specific to the uniqueness of each county or case, while still providing for basic consistency parameters for the district office social work supervision recommendations regarding risk assessments in child abuse and/or neglect investigations.

In order to adequately assess risk using the risk assessment model, the county agencies needed to be aware of both the administrative code requirements and the practice

implications. Being provided with ongoing information about practice recommendations would provide the county agencies with both administrative code and practice recommendations to guide decision making.

However, a difficulty was encountered relating to the implementation of the risk assessment process. The organization expected state staff to provide the recommendations without providing the state staff with all of the materials needed to provide consistent recommendations.

This problem was affecting many people, as it affected state agency staff, county agency staff, and the children and families served. The state agency staff were limited in their resources to provide information to the county agency staff. The county agency staff received mixed information regarding risk assessment from both the state agency staff and county agency employees that were trained at a training center by contract employees of the state organization. The families being served were affected by the service or child removal recommendations made about their family by county agency staff. Consequently, there were numerous parties that enhanced consistency in supervision recommendations would positively affect.

The main reason that this problem had not been solved related to the massive organization transition currently occurring. While all the other transition was occurring, programs besides welfare reform, were receiving little resources or attention. County agencies were required by statute to be assessing all families utilizing risk assessment, but they were not being provided with all the information that they need in order to do an effective job. Additionally, as the state agency was a very large bureaucracy, change occurred disjointedly. The state agency just completed the mandatory risk assessment

training to the last county agency in late December, and therefore had not had much time to target ongoing implementation issues.

Problem Documentation

The existing record keeping within the organization provided the documentation of problem. All social work supervision recommendations made involving the county agencies were documented in writing and maintained in a permanent file. This allowed for ease in record retrieval when needed at a future time. The writer's recommendations could be classified as one of four options. The recommendations could include child fatalities, constituent complaints, agency visits, and telephone consultations. The record review indicated inconsistency in the supervision recommendations regarding risk assessment.

The child fatality reports documented that both administrative code and practice recommendations were made in the formal report. The source of the information was the written report that resulted from a formal review, when a child died from child abuse or neglect or had been involved with child protective services. A child fatality review is a social work supervision activity that makes recommendations for systemic agency change as a result of a child's death. A child fatality review includes a review of the child's entire case history. The review includes formal recommendations, as a result of the review, which involve systemic practice recommendations and administrative code based upon the information obtained during the review.

During the review period, two child fatality reviews occurred in the writer's counties. One fatality was reviewed because the case was involved with the children's protective service unit, but the investigation did not indicate that the child died as a result of child abuse and/or neglect. One fatality was reviewed because the case was involved

with the children's protective services unit, and the investigation indicated that the child died as a result of neglect.

The data collection method utilized was an agency archive record review (See Table 1). The record review included fatalities occurring between March 1, 1997 through August 31, 1997. The record review was limited to the writer's four counties of primary responsibility during the review period.

Table 1
Four County Summary
Child Fatality Reviews
Risk Assessment Child Abuse and/or Neglect Supervision Recommendations

	March 97	April 97	May 97	June 97	July 97	Aug 97
AC only						
AC Plus					1	1
	AC Plus	Topic	Areas	Below		
Field Guide Used					1	1
Research Based Rec.						
Strength & Weakness'					1	1
Prof Judgment					1	
Drives Decision Making					1	1
Formal Training						

AC only = Administrative code supervision recommendations only
AC plus = All recommendations involving AC plus a practice based recommendation

Reasons for the fatality review:

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0 **Death due to suspected child abuse and/or neglect**
2 **Current Agency involvement at the time of the death**
0 **Agency involvement within one year prior to the death.**

In two out of two cases, the recommendations did address both administrative code compliance and practice recommendations. This is important to know because this type of recommendation has been successful at enhanced consistency, in the two cases that experienced a fatality.

Investigations into constituent complaints supported inconsistency in the provision of information to assist county agencies. The source of the information was the written reports of information provided to county agencies as a result of the constituent complaints about service delivery. Clients, and other concerned parties, may make a formal request for an individual case review if they are concerned about the county's handling of the case.

In 15 out of 17 cases requested for review, the complainant believed that the agency was inadequately and/or inappropriately conducting the child abuse and/or neglect assessments/investigations. In one out of 17 cases requested for review, the complainant believed that system problems exist in child welfare that need to be changed to prevent child abuse or neglect. In one out of 17 cases requested for review, the complainant was concerned about another agency involved in their case, not the actual child protective service agency. The district office staff review the requested individual cases and make case specific recommendations.

The data collection method utilized was an agency archive record review (See Table 2).

Table 2
Four County Summary
Constituent Complaints
Risk Assessment Child Abuse and/or Neglect Supervision Recommendations

	March 97	April 97	May 97	June 97	July 97	Aug 97
AC only	2	2	2	2	3	1
AC Plus		1	3			1
	AC Plus	Topic	Areas	Below		
Field Guide Used		1	1			
Research Based Rec.						
Strength & Weakness'		1	2			
Prof. Judgment						
Drives Decision Making		1	2			1
Formal Training						

AC only = Administrative code supervision recommendations only
AC plus = All recommendations involving AC plus a practice based recommendation

Reasons for Complaints:

15 Complainant believed that the agency was inadequately and/or inappropriately conducting risk assessments/ investigations during child abuse and /or neglect investigations.

1 Complainant believed that systems problems exist in child welfare that need to be changed in order to prevent child abuse and/or neglect.

1 Complainant concerns were with agencies involved in their child abuse and/or neglect assessment/ investigation, but not the child protective services agency.

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The record review included constituent complaints occurring March 1, 1997, through August 31, 1997. The record review was limited to the writer's four counties of primary responsibility during the review period.

In 12 out of 17 cases, the recommendations did not address both administrative code compliance and practice recommendations. This was important to recognize that this type of supervision recommendation involves a cursory case review. Perhaps if the review was more through, similar to that of a fatality, the recommendations would be more likely to have enhanced consistency.

Documentation of information provided during on site agency visits served as evidence of inconsistency in supervision recommendations. The source of the information was the written reports submitted monthly to document on site social work supervision recommendations. The district office staff visit monthly with the agency to provide social work supervision recommendations.

The data collection method utilized was an agency archive record review (See Table 3). The record review included agency visits occurring March 1, 1997, through August 31, 1997. The record review was limited to the writer's four counties of primary responsibility during the review period.

In one out of 25 cases, the recommendations did not address both administrative code compliance and practice recommendations. For this data, it was important to recognize that the data includes formal training provided by the organization staff. That training, by curriculum design, was intended to address both administrative code compliance and practice recommendations. The training was a one time training provided by the organization, with further and ongoing training being provided by the formal

regional training center. Therefore, if the formal training was excluded from the data, the majority of the recommendations would not be consistent.

Table3
Four County Summary
Agency Visits
Risk Assessment Child Abuse and/or Neglect Supervision Recommendations

	March 97	April 97	May 97	June 97	July 97	Aug 97
AC only					1	
AC Plus			7	6	2	
	AC Plus	Topic	Areas	Below		
Field Guide Used		1		1	1	
Research Based Rec.				1		
Strength & Weakness'			1	1	1	
Prot. Judgment				1		
Drives Decision Making				2	1	
Formal Training	3	5	5	4		

AC only = Administrative code supervision recommendations only
AC plus = All recommendations involving AC plus a practice based recommendation

Documentation of telephone contacts for consultation indicated consistent information being provided to the county agencies. The source of the information is the written agency narrative sheet that documents the information provided to the county

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agencies during the telephone consultation. The district office staff is available to answer routine questions and suggest recommendations, at the initiation of the agency. However, it was important to recognize that this review period had only one telephone consultation.

The data collection method utilized was an agency archive record review (See Table 4). The record review included telephone consultation occurring March 1, 1997, through August 31, 1997. The record review was limited to the writer's four counties of primary responsibility during the review period. In one out of one case, the recommendations did address both administrative code compliance and practice recommendations.

The record review, of all fatalities, complaints, agency visits, and telephone consultation indicated that out of the total 45 recommendations related to child abuse and/or neglect risk assessments/investigations, that 13 recommendations did not address both administrative code compliance and practice considerations.

Table 4
Four County Summary
Telephone Consultation
Risk Assessment Child Abuse and/or Neglect Supervision Recommendations

	March 97	April 97	May 97	June 97	July 97	Aug 97
AC only						
AC Plus						1
	AC Plus	Topic	Areas	Below		
Field Guide Used						
Research Based Rec.						
Strength & Weakness'						1
Prof. Judgment						
Drives Decision Making						1
Formal Training						

AC only = Administrative code supervision recommendations only
AC plus = All recommendations involving AC plus a practice based recommendation

Another source of evidence that documented the existence of the problem was interviews with county agency staff. During the ongoing quality assurance monitoring process, three line staff, one line supervisor, and an agency administrator discussed their concerns about the risk assessment process.

The agency administrator and the line supervisor were interviewed by the writer, and the writer's colleagues, about the risk assessment process on June 9, 1997. The three

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county line staff were interviewed on June 19, 1997, by the writer, and the writer's colleagues, about the risk assessment process on June 19, 1997.

The results of the interview were documented on the risk assessment foundation inquiry interviewing guide (an organization developed form), and were summarized in the agency's formal evaluation report issued August 21, 1997. The county agency staff all expressed frustration about the inconsistency in the guidance for risk assessment implementation by the state supervisory agency.

A final source of evidence to support that staff have not received consistent information was identified during the University of Southern Maine's (1997) study of the writer's state risk assessment model. During the study 1,427 child protective service workers, from the writer's state, were interviewed about risk assessment. The study revealed that "On-going support and technical assistance appears to be a clear need for many workers. Almost 38 % of the respondents reported that their questions about the proper use of the instrument had not been adequately answered" (p. VII).

Causative Analysis

There were several causes of the problem. One cause was that staff lacked concrete information that supported effective practice recommendations. The strategy used to determine the cause related to determining if the writer's agency provided the staff with concrete information regarding practice standards or potential supervision recommendations in risk assessment.

The writer further investigated the cause by surveying staff about their beliefs regarding the situation. The writer surveyed all six district office social service line staff. The survey utilized is located in the Appendix (See Appendix A), and the results obtained

from the survey are outlined in Table 5 (See Table 5). For the purpose of the survey, available practice information or supervision recommendations were operationally defined as materials available in writing, within the district office, that would provide information to support practice recommendations. The survey utilized a Likert scale with staff selecting from adequate resources, somewhat adequate/available resources, neutral availability and adequacy of resources, somewhat limited/inadequate resources, or limited/ inadequate resources.

Table 5

Improving Technical Assistance Supervision Recommendations Results

	1	2	3	4	5
Importance of AC Recommendations #			2	1	3
Importance of Practice Recommendations #			1		5
Importance of having resources to support AC Recommendations #			3		3
Importance of Having Resources to Support practice Recommendations #				1	5
Resources Available to Support AC Recommendations *		1	4	1	
Resources Available to Support Practice Recommendations *	1	3	1	1	

Note. AC – administrative code recommendations

# Questions
1=not important
2=limited importance
3=neutral importance
4=somewhat important
5=very important

* Questions
1= unavailable/inadequate
2=limited availability/limited adequacy
3=neutral availability/adequacy
4=somwhat available/somewhat adequate
5=very available/very adequate

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Another cause was some reluctance by staff to move to accepting practice recommendations as part of their changing role of focusing more on practice recommendations than solely on administrative code compliance. The social service line staff were surveyed to gather information on their beliefs regarding the relative importance of administrative code compliance recommendations and practice recommendations.

Out of six staff surveyed, five staff indicated that practice recommendations were important or somewhat important, but four staff out of six staff surveyed reported that concrete resources to assist in practice recommendations were limited/inadequate, somewhat limited or inadequate. The writer surveyed all six district office social service line staff. The survey utilized is located in the Appendix (See Appendix A), and the results of the survey are outlined in Table 5 (See Table 5).

For the purpose of the survey, available practice information or supervision recommendations were operationally defined as materials available in writing within the district office that would provide information to support practice recommendations. The survey utilized a Likert scale with staff selecting from adequate resources, somewhat adequate/available resources, neutral availability and adequacy of resources, somewhat limited/inadequate resources, or limited/ inadequate resources. The survey utilized a Likert scale with staff selecting from very important, somewhat important, neutral importance, limited importance, and not important.

Out of the six staff surveyed, four staff indicated that administrative code compliance recommendations were important or somewhat important, and four staff out of the six staff surveyed reported concrete resources were available/adequate or somewhat

available/adequate. The writer surveyed all district office social service staff. The survey utilized is located in the Appendix (See Appendix A), and the results of the survey are outlined in Table 5 (See Table 5).

The results of the investigation yielded information that indicated that more staff viewed practice considerations as important or somewhat important than viewed administrative code compliance recommendations as important or somewhat important. The results also indicated that staff believed that they did not have as much availability of concrete resources to support practice recommendations as they had for administrative code recommendations. The results indicated that the staff felt that practice recommendations were important and therefore, it does not appear to be a reluctance on the part of the majority of staff to view practice recommendations as part of their changing role. Rather, it appears to be that the staff had not been provided with the concrete resources needed to support effective practice recommendations.

The writer surveyed colleagues post implementation using the survey located in Appendix D. Surveys were provided to the six colleagues located at the writer's district office for anonymous response. Of the six surveyed, six responded to the survey. All of the colleagues reported that administrative code compliance recommendations, practice recommendations, and available resources were important for a multitude of reasons.

The colleagues provided the following answers to the question "why do you or do you not think that administrative code compliance recommendations are important?" One colleague reported that the administrative code helps ensure minimum standards. After mirroring this response, another colleague also added that the administrative rules are based upon "good practice." It was stated that administrative code is the force of the law, and

allows the agency to provide supervisory functions effectively. Another colleague stated that the administrative code is driven by the "good practice" and if agencies do not follow administrative code then they increase their agency liability. This colleague expanded this statement by indicating that administrative code can serve as a valuable tool for agencies to determine the level of services being provided to children and families. Another colleague indicated that the administrative code outlines the minimum standards for child welfare practice. Accountability and consistency standards were identified as yet another reason for the importance of administrative code practice

The colleagues provided the following responses to the question of "why do you or do you not think that practice recommendations are important?" Again, all the colleagues reported that practice recommendations are important . "Casework practice recommendations are important because children and families are important" according to one colleague. The colleague expanded the statement by indicating that agencies need to be informed when they remove children without providing preventive services or when they fail to reunify children when the environment is safe. According to another colleague, "as professional social workers, it is our opportunity to impact the effect public policy has on the lives of families." Allowing for individual and global family situations is another benefit of case practice recommendations, according to one colleague. It was stated by another colleague that "practice recommendations are important to assist public children service agencies in achieving appropriate social work outcomes for children and families." One colleague identified that practice recommendations are important in child welfare in particular because many case workers are not formally trained in social work interventions. Another colleague believed that practice recommendations can also improve consistency

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efforts, elaborating by stating that "we are all human and can learn from each other, with providing recommendations from a more global view point, agencies can improve their practice and service provision to families." "Children are hurt by poor case work practice. If I can change at least one person, stop one person from doing something that is harmful to a child's emotional or physical well-being, it is worth all the recommendations that fall on deaf ears", according to another colleague.

The colleagues answered "why do you or do you not think that having available resources to support administrative code compliance recommendations is important?" as follows. Having resources necessary to support administrative code compliance is important because it is important to effect positive change and/ or insure minimal standards. The survey indicate that one colleague reported that it would be difficult to apply standards without the resources. Another colleague stated that "behavior follows resources, if we want compliance, we have to have resources." Resources can be very useful, according to another colleague, but not without other interventions. This statement was further expanded by stating that many caseworkers and supervisor do not simply make changes because they read a research article, but rather make changes in practice because of training, conferences or the advice from child welfare professionals. Using the resources can reinforce the practice changes, initiated by the training, conferences, or supervision advice, but by itself, literature doe not initiate the change. It was stated that the child welfare professionals need to initiate the change. One colleague speculated that resources are vital for both administrative code and practice recommendations because without resources agencies may continue to make the same mistake over and over. Having

information to provide to agencies would help agencies to understand the reasoning behind recommendations, and thus be more apt to follow the recommendation.

The colleagues responded to the question "why do you or do you not think having resources available to support practice recommendations is important?" as follows. Four colleagues provided the same answer as they provided for the previous question regarding the importance of administrative code resources. The responses about the behavior following the resources, and the literature reinforcing the change, were restated in response to this question. Also, the responses related to understanding the reasoning for the recommendations, and having resources to encourage people from making the same mistakes were restated. Additionally, another colleague responded that practice is difficult to support without supportive services and resources. Another colleague stated that "to improve child welfare practice it is imperative best practice initiatives are supported by available resources."

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The topical areas of the research review included the following. The writer gained insight that inconsistency in social work supervision had historically been a difficulty in many agencies.

In fact, Blodgett (1995) reported that the social work profession has historically had difficulty with evaluation of social work practice interventions, and this contributed to the belief that service intervention was intangible, and therefore could not be objectively evaluated.

Courtney and Collins (1994) suggested that inadequate databases made consistency efforts difficult. They suggested that the field of social work had not adequately

documented service interventions via databases. They proposed that the inadequate databases make tracking systemic issues very difficult.

Wells (1994) reported that consistency in social work supervision had been a difficulty because the profession could not agree on what constituted effective practice. Wells reported that when the profession, collectively, could not determine what exactly was effective practice, then difficulties develop in holding social workers accountable. That is, the decision if certain practices or interventions were effective had yet to be determined, in many areas of social work, which contributed to inconsistency in expectations for practice or supervising practice.

According to Fauman (1989), agencies struggled to implement social work supervision practices because historically there had not been a public outcry for accountability. Fauman argued that in other professions, such as the medical profession or education, there were certain treatments or techniques that would work in different situations. Or that in situations, more than one option existed for treatment or intervention techniques. He contended that the field of social work had not been held to the same standards that other professions have been, which contributes to inconsistency. He surmised that social work practices could be held to some degree of consistency, within certain parameters, such as in the current medical profession.

The writer gained insight that inconsistency can be related to the particular setting. For clarity, the writer learned that inconsistency in settings can be contributed to organizational issues and/or personnel issues.

Stuart (1995) argued that the manner in which a change was implemented affected inconsistency due to personnel factors. He proposed that the manner in which change was

presented by the administrator was a key influence on the likelihood of change being accepted with minimal resistance. Furthermore, he indicated the systems or agencies that allowed individual supervisors, units, or bureau do their own thing would also struggle with consistency issues, unless there were clear expectations and parameters developed.

Miranda and Lerner research supported Stuart's propositions. Miranda and Lerner (1995) suggested that system reliability, or consistency, were directly related to the organization's ability to foster redundancy to insure consistency efforts. Therefore, in organizations or agencies where protocol, policies or systems were in place for doing things, then consistency was a greater likelihood.

Pecora and Austin (1987) proposed that performance problems were often linked to organizational issues such as "unclear agency policies, resource limitations, vague work priorities or performance standards, poor supervision, caseload demands, and assignment of inappropriate cases" (p. 92). Consequently, they believed that the organizational context was a key factor in performance and any expectations for performance such as consistency.

Recognizing that inconsistency had historically been a difficulty in social work and that organizational issues impacted consistency efforts, the writer further delved into factors influencing consistency efforts in risk assessment in child abuse and /or neglect investigations. The writer gained insight that inconsistency in child welfare supervision related to child abuse and /or neglect risk assessments could occur for several reasons.

Lyons, Doueck, and Wodarski (1996) argued that "criticism has been leveled at the field of risk assessment because of the confused and diverse way agencies use their risk assessment systems" (p.144). The implementation period in risk assessment was considered a key factor in ongoing consistency efforts. This issue was further dissected

and the practice component of risk assessment was a factor that influenced consistency efforts. In fact, Doueck, Bronson, & Levine (1992) suggested that consistency in risk assessment implementation could best be achieved by competent implementation of the practice techniques that facilitate risk assessment.

English and Pecora (1994) indicated that inadequate training, follow up supervision, and quality assurance procedures impacted consistency efforts in child abuse and/or neglect investigations involving risk assessment. Also, English and Pecora suggested that one reason for "the inconsistent implementation of risk models in decision-making in child protective services was the lack of clarity regarding the importance of given risk factors in different types of abuse, and the effect of the interaction of risk factors" (p. 467).

Lyons et al. (1996) suggested risk assessment inconsistency could possibly be linked to many case workers viewing and utilizing risk assessment as a form, and not a process to enhance decision making. They identified that in many cases, workers were completing the risk assessment summary forms after they had made a case decision. This defeats the point and principle of risk assessment to guide case work decisions and case intervention. The University of Southern Maine (1997) findings supported Lyons et al. research by finding that county staff "frequently acknowledged that they use the Ohio Family Risk Instrument more for documentation and justification of decisions rather than to determine risk." (p. VI).

The 1997 University of Southern Maine's study on the reliability, validity and implementation of the writer's state risk assessment tool concluded that when the risk assessment was completed in accordance with the Risk Assessment Field Guide (Ohio

Department of Human Services, 1997), that the risk assessment did indeed predict overall risk. The study concluded that several factors strongly predicted the likelihood of children reentering children services interventions. For example, severe attachment problems were 55 times more likely for reentry, children with developmental difficulties were two times more likely for reentry, and caretakers who victimized other children were two times more likely for reentry. (University of Southern Maine, 1997).

This particular research exemplifies the need for consistency in risk assessment supervision recommendations. Because, if risk assessments are completed consistently, utilizing the field guide, this can increase the likelihood of predicting risk. However, if the risk assessment supervision recommendations are inconsistent, then the county completion of the process is likely to be inconsistent due to the inconsistent direction.

The scope of the review was limited to target research appropriate to assist in addressing the presenting problem. The review was limited to promoting consistency efforts in organizations. The review was further limited by focusing on social work settings and consistency issues. The review was further limited by focusing on child abuse and /or neglect risk assessment consistency efforts. Finally, the review included research related to the writer's state risk assessment model and consistency efforts. The review was limited to research within the last ten years.

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The state supervisory agency representative will enhance the provision of recommendations provided to county agencies during social work supervision of child abuse and/or neglect risk assessments.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

1. Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency will be consistent as determined by a case supervision record review.
2. Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency will be helpful as determined by the county agency staff indicating on a survey that 12 or more of the supervision recommendations were helpful.
3. Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency will be consistent as determined by the county agency staff indicating that 12 or more of the supervision recommendation included both administrative code and practice information.
4. Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency will be incorporated into practice in individual cases as determined by the county agency staff indicating on a survey that 12 or

more of the supervision recommendation were incorporated into practice on individual cases.

5. Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency will be incorporated into the overall practice of the agency as determined by the county agency staff indicating on a survey that 12 or more of the supervision recommendation was incorporated into the overall practice of the agency.
6. Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency were utilized by the date of survey implementation as determined by the county agency staff indicating on a survey that 12 or more of the supervision recommendation were utilized by the date of survey implementation.

Consistency will be operationally defined as a social work supervision recommendation that includes an administrative code compliance recommendation and a practice recommendation related to the child abuse and/or neglect risk assessment.

An administrative code recommendation will be operationally defined as a recommendation that is directly indicated in the state administrative code governing child abuse and/or neglect risk assessments.

The Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines practice as "the continuous exercise of a profession" p.923. Sheafor et al. (1994) stated that "In reality, practice is a set of actions and behaviors by the social worker" (p. xi.). Furthermore, they define practice as "the process of using knowledge and applying theory in order to bring about specific types of change." P. 42. Ohio Revised Code 4757.01 indicates that the

> (C) 'practice of social work' means the application of specialized knowledge of human development and behavior and social, economic, and cultural systems in directly assisting individuals, families, and groups in a clinical setting to improve or restore their capacity for social functioning, including counseling, the use of psychosocial interventions, and the use of psychotherapy, which includes the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders.

Consequently, a practice recommendation was operationally defined as a recommendation that would fit within the above definitions of practice.

Supervision recommendations were operationally defined as all recommendations involving child fatality reviews, constituent complaints, monthly visits, and telephone consultation that were documented and became a formal part of the agency supervision record.

Measurement of Outcomes

The first outcome was measured by a record review of the documentation of social work supervision activities conducted by the writer. The record review included the recommendations of child fatalities, constituent complaints, monthly visits, and telephone consultations. The outcome considered each contact one recommendation. The outcome combined the different types of supervision recommendations (child fatalities, constituent complaints, monthly visits, and telephone consultation) when considering the measurement of the outcome.

Recommendations were considered consistent if the supervision recommendation documented both an administrative code compliance and a practice recommendation. Recommendations were considered not to promote consistency efforts if they documented

only an administrative code compliance recommendation, or if they documented only a practice recommendation. The collective tally compensated for the factor that some of the social work supervision recommendations, by design, were more focused toward practice or administrative code compliance recommendations.

The standard of performance that served as a benchmark of success for the outcome was that 12 out of 15 collective supervision recommendations included both administrative code rule compliance, and a practice consideration. This benchmark was selected because the archive records review evidence indicated that the writer had been achieving this benchmark in 32 out of 45 supervision recommendations (71 %) during a six month period. The benchmark of 12 out of 15 supervision recommendations (80 %) represented an increase in the consistency of the supervision recommendations from the archive record review period.

The writer believed that this was a realistic benchmark, because the practicum benchmark included the formal training provided by the district office staff to three of the four county agencies during the archive record review period. The formal all county staff training was a one time training to provide risk assessment practice and administrative code recommendations to all the county agency staff. If the formal training had not considered in the calculation of the archive record review, the writer would have only been providing 15 of 28 supervision recommendations (51 %) that included both administrative code and practice recommendations.

The writer could not accurately predict the number of child fatalities, constituent complaints, and telephone consultations, as these activities were initiated by a death, an unhappy client, or the agency. Therefore, the benchmark of considering 15 supervision

recommendations was based upon the archive record review that indicated that 47 supervision recommendations were provided by the writer to the county agency staff, and then dividing the number of supervision recommendations in half to fit the three month time period and further by a fourth to adjust to implementing with one county. The benchmark of 15 was slightly more than half, but the archive record review period included a period of time when the writer had been on an educational leave that provided less opportunity for supervision recommendations. The writer believed that the benchmark was an accurate predication of the number of supervision recommendations that would occur during the three month implementation.

Outcome's two through six utilized a survey (Appendix C) to obtain feedback from the county agency staff about the supervision recommendations. After the implementation of the supervision recommendations, the county agency staff were provided with a written survey (Appendix C), to evaluate the county agency staff perception of the value, content, and utilization of the supervision recommendations, and how many recommendations were incorporated into practice. The survey was solicited post implementation to promote honest valuable feedback regarding the effectiveness of the supervision recommendations. At the completion of the practicum implementation, the survey was collected and summarized in a table.

The selection of the 12 out of 15 supervision recommendations remained consistent with the logic that the writer intended for the recommendations to actually influence practice in the county agency. Therefore, the writer strove for the same level of quality in the benchmark, and the same quantity of the benchmark.

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem solved in this practicum was that the county agencies, responsible for the administration of legally mandated child protective services, were not being provided consistent social work supervision recommendations regarding child abuse and/or neglect risk assessments/ investigations by the state supervisory agency.

The writer gained insight that:

1. Inconsistency in social work supervision had historically been a difficulty in many agencies, which contributed to resistance to change.
2. Inconsistency could be related to a particular setting, which influenced the particular solution strategy that was most appropriate for a setting.
3. Inconsistency in child welfare supervision related to child abuse and/or neglect risk assessments could occur for several reasons, which influenced the specific solution strategies utilized.

There were several potential solutions gleaned from the literature review, based upon the above topical areas.

Courtney and Collins (1994) suggested the utilization of a management information system to evaluate and promote consistency in practice. A management information system would be a helpful tool to evaluate consistency in supervision recommendations to county agencies, but the district office did not have the hardware or software capabilities to track the data on a large scale. Consequently, the writer was not

able to track data on a large scale, but did utilize a computer to track the outcome data for the practicum.

Continuous quality assurance monitoring based upon process, outcomes, and structure were the key to consistency and effective quality assurance (Schaub, 1994). The solution addressed that consistency efforts could best be promoted by utilizing a process, a structure, and an outcome methodology to track consistency efforts. The solution generated involved developing a structure (practice resource directory), a process (utilizing the resource directory when providing supervision recommendations), and an outcome (the measurement of the practicum to determine enhancement). The solution was readily adaptable to enhancing the consistency of supervision recommendations in child abuse and/or neglect risk assessments. Thus, the writer incorporated this solution strategy into the practicum process.

Miranda and Lerner (1995) suggested that consistency could be best improved by creating a system that fostered redundancy and replication. The solution was well suited for the practicum setting. A resource directory provided a tool to foster redundancy that increased consistency. The resource directory was incorporated into a process as a component of a formal system. The solution was incorporated into the practicum process.

Pecora and Austin (1987) suggested that consistency could be promoted by having clear policies and standards, and adequate resources and supervision. The proposed solution was very well suited for the practicum setting. The practicum benchmark identified the expected standard. The resource directory addressed the resource limitations. The solution was incorporated into the practicum process.

English and Pecora (1994), proposed that adequate training, supervision, and quality assurance activities would promote consistency in risk assessment. The solution was partially suited for the practicum setting. The direct training of line level case workers was completed by the regional training center. The line supervision of caseworkers was completed by the county agencies. The quality assurance activities were the responsibility of the writer. The writer conducted quality assurance activities with the county agency utilizing the risk assessment foundation inquiry quality assurance document.

The quality assurance review was offered to county agency, and provided the writer with greater information regarding the status of risk assessment in the county, while providing risk assessment supervision recommendations to the county agency. This quality assurance activity occurred during monthly visits, constituent complaints, and child fatality reviews. This quality assurance activity was not feasible for telephone consultation due to the fact that the writer did not have access to the actual case for review during a telephone contact. The writer partially implemented this solution in the practicum.

English and Pecora (1994) argued that improving the direct service staff's understanding of the important relationship between research and practice was the key to improving consistency in risk assessment. English and Pecora believed that improving the knowledge of the link between risk factors and the interrelationship of several factors was a method of improving consistency in risk assessment, which was well suited for the practicum setting.

Increasing the county agency staff's awareness of the research based link between the risk assessment model and practice was an issue for consistency efforts. Staff that

believed in the value of risk assessment, tended to utilize risk assessment to guide practice decision making, rather then viewing risk assessment as simply more paperwork.

During supervision activities such as child fatality reviews, constituent complaints, and monthly visits, the writer reviewed cases and utilized quality assurance procedures, in the form of case reviews using the risk assessment foundation inquiry guide form, to increase county agency staff's awareness of the research and practice link. The writer reviewed the current risk assessment in each case reviewed using the risk assessment foundation inquiry guide. The writer utilized the review as an opportunity to discuss the research correlation that supported the implementation of risk assessment in child abuse and/or neglect investigations. Therefore, the writer incorporated this solution strategy into the practicum process.

Lyons et al. (1996) suggested that improving consistency in risk assessment could best be achieved by having workers focus on risk assessment as a case work decision making process and not a form to collect data. This solution strategy was linked with making supervision recommendations that were practice based. This was incorporated into the solution strategy utilized for the practicum.

English (1997) indicated that the most important factor for consistency in risk assessments, was that staff use risk assessment to guide decision making, and not simply completing paperwork. This solution strategy was incorporated into the practicum via the practice recommendations component.

Description of Selected Solutions

The literature review caused the writer to identify several solutions. The first idea generated as a result of the review involved incorporating several of the solutions to create

a more suitable solution for the practicum setting. Utilizing several of the proposed solutions will allow the solutions to be adaptable to the practicum setting.

The writer recognized that the research did not support a particular right or wrong method in any given case because of case uniqueness. The writer developed a solution that provided parameters for consistency but accounted for individual uniqueness of agencies and cases. By measuring for outcome one, solely if the recommendation considered both administrative code compliance and practice considerations addressed this issue. This was due to the fact that the actual recommendation was not critiqued for content, except for if it considered both administrative code and practice implications. The writer incorporated this solution.

Another idea generated as a result of the literature review, involved gleaning several of the ideas from improving consistency in risk assessment for use as suggested practice recommendations. Utilizing the solutions that had specific recommendations for promoting consistency was an excellent source for incorporating practice recommendations into the supervisory recommendation process. The writer incorporated this idea in the practicum. After reviewing the literature, the writer determined that the solution should be developed in a manner that would allow for full implementation across the district, in the future, if approved.

The solution that was implemented was a combination of several solutions. The writer incorporated the solution strategies of Schaub (1994) and Miranda and Lerner (1995) and develop a structured process of providing supervision recommendations in order to foster consistency efforts. The structured process was as follows.

The writer completed the following activities for all risk assessment supervision activities. The writer recorded all requests for supervision recommendations. The writer consulted with the administrative code to provide a legal citation for all risk assessment supervision recommendations. The writer consulted the resource directory for information regarding risk assessment practice recommendations. The writer documented all supervision recommendations by the completion of the Supervision Recommendations Documentation Form (Appendix B). After providing all of the supervision recommendations, the writer provided the agency staff with the Supervision Recommendation Survey (Appendix C).

In addition to the above general solution activities, in the event of child fatalities, constituent complaints, and monthly visits, the writer reviewed risk assessment cases and provided supervision recommendations. Cases were reviewed utilizing the risk assessment foundation inquiry guide document. The county agency was provided with a copy of the risk assessment foundation inquiry document review form. For child fatalities and constituent complaints, the writer provided the agency with written recommendations as a result of the case review.

For telephone consultations and monthly visits, the writer provided the agency with verbal recommendations and documented the recommendations on the Supervision Recommendation Documentation form (Appendix B) to become a part of the agency's supervision record.

The writer utilized the solution strategy of Courtney and Collins (1994) and tracked the collected data on a computer system. The writer completed all record documentation, and tallied the data on a computer spreadsheet. This allowed for easily accessible

summarized data. This also allowed for continued collection of data in the event that the process was utilized district wide.

The writer utilized the solution strategy of Pecora and Austin (1987) and developed a resource directory to assist in making risk assessment practice recommendations. The writer incorporated the solution strategies of English and Pecora (1994) and Lyons et al. (1996) to guide the risk assessment practice recommendations.

The writer focused practice recommendations on the following research based information. The correlation between research and the risk assessment factors and increased likelihood of predicting future risk of child abuse and neglect. The link between adequate supervision and quality assurance and consistency in practice for administrative staff. The link between adequate training and consistency in risk assessment. Critical need to utilize the risk assessment process to guide decision making, not post decision making, in order to facilitate consistency. The utilization of the Risk Assessment Field Guide (Ohio Department of Human Services, 1997), to increase consistency in practice.

The writer developed the data collection instrument, Supervision Recommendation Documentation (Appendix B), in such a manner that it triggered the writer to particularly incorporate the above practice recommendations that have been linked, by research, with risk assessment and enhanced consistency. The form enabled one to readily identify the research related area of the practice recommendations and provided a line to indicate if the agency was provided with a written copy of information from the practice resource directory. The writer incorporated the journal articles, or other source documents into a resource directory for ease of use.

This combination of solution strategies was the most appropriate for the practicum setting. This allowed for addressing uniqueness of county agencies, and individual case, while providing for some general consistency parameters. The solution combination best afforded the practicum of being successful in achieving the outcomes. For if the process was utilized, and the county agency was similar to the agencies within the research, the supervision recommendation would be consistent and hopefully then be viewed as being helpful to the county agency. The solution strategy addressed the need of providing concrete resource to facilitate practice recommendations, by the development of a practice resource directory.

Report of Action Taken

Prior to the implementation of the practicum solution, the writer obtained permission from the writer's supervisor, and the county agency selected to participate. Then, the writer introduced the practicum to the writer's colleagues and requested their involvement in acquiring practice resource information. The writer then located, and obtained concrete written information, such as journal articles, conference proceedings, etc. which provided research based practice recommendations. After identifying and obtaining the information, the writer compiled a resource directory that contains information that supported risk assessment practice recommendations.

Next, the writer presented the directory and provided training to colleagues on utilizing the resource directory to promote practice recommendations. The writer completed this training to colleagues during an informal unit staff meeting. The overview focused on the practice information available within the resource directory and addressed

the potential positive benefits of utilizing the information. The writer than made available the resource directory for colleague use.

The writer utilized the resource directory when providing social work supervision activities to the county agency during the three month implementation. The writer utilized the resource directory when providing 15 recommendations associated with child fatality reviews, constituent complaints, monthly visits, and telephone consultations. The writer recorded the social work supervision activities during the implementation. The writer tracked the supervision recommendations on a computer .

The writer provided the county staff with instructions on the completion of the Supervision Recommendation Survey (Appendix C) and provided the county with the survey. Post implementation, the writer collected the survey from the county supervisor. Following implementation, the writer presented the Post Implementation Improving Technical Assistance Supervision Recommendations Colleague Input Survey (Appendix D) to solicit information from colleagues during a staff meeting. The writer compiled the practicum data. This information was incorporated into the colleague debriefing to potentially engage colleagues in utilization of the resource directory after the practicum process. The writer also provided a debriefing to the county agency staff.

The writer encountered some difficulties during the implementation process. The county implementation agency, during the practicum implementation, received an unfavorable program evaluation involving their utilization of risk assessment. The writer than anticipated that the program evaluation would either make the agency more receptive or less receptive to the practicum. The writer counteracted this potential problem, by discussing with the agency staff that the writer desired to truly know if the practice

recommendations were helpful and encouraged the agency supervisor to respond honestly to the survey.

After providing the survey to the county supervisor, the writer did not receive the survey back by the requested deadline. The writer had to make two additional requests prior to the survey being returned. Following receipt of the survey the writer debriefed with the county supervisor regarding the process, and provided an overview of the results at a unit staff meeting.

Chapter V: Results

Results

The county public children's service agency responsible for the investigation of child abuse and neglect investigations, through the utilization of risk assessment, had not been provided with consistent supervision recommendations to facilitate the implementation of risk assessment. The writer's state had recently passed legislation that mandated the implementation of risk assessment in child abuse and neglect investigations. The district office responsible for providing supervision and leadership had not been provided with the resources to support practice recommendations. The writer developed a resource directory to enhance the consistency of supervision recommendations.

The goal of the practicum was that the state supervisory agency representative would enhance the provision of recommendations provided to county agencies during social work supervision of child abuse and/or neglect risk assessments.

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

1. Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency will be consistent as determined by a case supervision record review.

   This outcome was met.

   The results related to the outcome are as follows. During the implementation period the county agency did not experience any child fatalities, and only received one constituent complaint. The constituent compliant included both administrative code compliance and practice recommendations. Six visits occurred during the

review period and all six of the visits addressed both administrative code compliance and practice recommendations. Eight written or telephone consultations occurred during the implementation period. Of the eight activities six included both administrative code compliance recommendations and practice recommendations. Two of the recommendations addressed only practice considerations (See Table 6).

Table 6
Supervision Recommendations Summary
Outcome 1

	Written or Telephone Consultation	Visit	Constituent Complaint	Child Fatality
Number of Recommendations	8	6	1	0
Administrative Code Only	0	0	0	0
Practice Recommendation Only	2	0	0	0
Both Administrative Code and Practice Recommendations	6	6	1	0

2. Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency will be helpful as determined by the county agency staff indicating on a survey that 12 or more of the supervision recommendation were helpful.

This outcome was met.

The results related to the outcome are as follows. The county agency staff reported that 15 of the 15 supervision recommendations were helpful.

3. **Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency will be consistent as determined by the county agency staff indicating that 12 or more of the supervision recommendation included both administrative code and practice information.**

   This outcome was not met.

   The results related to the outcome are as follows. The county agency staff indicated on the survey that 8 of the 15 recommendations were inclusive of administrative code compliance information and case practice information.

4. **Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency will be incorporated into practice in individual cases as determined by the county agency staff indicating on a survey that 12 or more of the supervision recommendation were incorporated into practice on individual cases.**

   This outcome was not met.

   The results related to the outcome are as follows. The county agency survey results indicated that 3 of the 15 recommendations were incorporated into the practice of the individual case. In addition to the numerical representation, the survey included a comment that stated "many cases closed".

5. Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency will be incorporated into the overall practice of the agency as determined by the county agency staff indicating on a survey that 12 or more of the supervision recommendation was incorporated into the overall practice of the agency.

This outcome was not met.

The results related to the outcome are as follows. The survey indicated that 10 of the 15 recommendations were incorporated into the overall practice of the agency. In addition to the numerical representation the survey contained a comment that stated " overall agency screening process changed".

6. Twelve out of 15 risk assessment supervision recommendations provided by the writer to one county agency were utilized by the date of survey implementation as determined by the county agency staff indicating on a survey that 12 or more of the supervision recommendation were utilized by the date of survey implementation.

   This outcome was not met.

   The results related to the outcome are as follows. The survey results indicated that 10 of the 15 recommendations were utilized to date. In addition to the numerical representation the survey included a comment which indicated "all intake".

Discussion

The outcome survey seems to indicate various information. One general factor that may have influenced all of the outcomes related to the county staff survey involved a program evaluation of the agency risk assessment process. The results concluded that the agency needed to improve services during the assessment/investigation process of the agency. By virtue of this evaluation the agency staff perception of risk assessment recommendations may have been either positively or negatively influenced.

The information obtained from Outcome 1 and Outcome 3 measure the same information, but the results are apparently based upon different perceptions of what constitutes both administrative code and practice recommendations. This difference could be accounted for by the fact that the writer did not provide the county staff completing the survey with the definitions of what constituted administrative code compliance and practice recommendations for the purposes of the practicum. Another possibly for the differences could be that the survey was completed based upon the county staff perception at the time of the survey completion; Whereas, the writer tabulated the outcome based upon the ongoing computation of the information.

The county staff, according to the survey results found that all of the recommendations were helpful as indicated in Outcome 2. However, as represented in the remaining outcomes, did not always incorporate this into the practice of the case, or the agency. The writer finds this particularly interesting especially when examining Outcome 4 which indicated that the recommendations were only incorporated into three of the actual cases, but the survey indicated that all recommendations were deemed helpful. The writer speculates that this result may simply be part of the phenomena that often one realizes the need or value in something, but without a specific plan of action implementation becomes difficult. Stated another way, knowledge of a problem does not always change behavior. Outcome 4 also contained the comment that many of the cases were closed. This may indicate that the agency may have been contemplating closing the case and simply closed the case without utilizing the recommendations as a time management tool. For clarification, if the agency had decided to terminate involvement it would be a better utilization of time to utilize the information on new cases within the organization.

It appears that this may have been a factor as the agency indicated on Outcome 5 and Outcome 6 that the recommendations made on specific cases or situations became incorporated into the practice of the agency or utilized to date on 10 out of 15 of the recommendations. Additionally, the comments made on the survey for Outcome 5 indicated that the agency changed the entire screening process of what was accepted for an assessment of child abuse and neglect. Outcome 6 reported that the recommendations utilized to date include 10 of the 15 recommendations with the comment indicating that all of the intake (another term used to identify initial assessments/investigations of child abuse and/ or neglect) were utilized. It is the writer's opinion that if the agency changed the entire screening process in order to approach cases from the risk assessment process then this is an excellent unanticipated outcome.

As a result of the outcomes, it is evident that the agency staff found the recommendations helpful. However, it is also evident that the agency struggled to incorporate the recommendations into the direct practice of individual cases, and the overall practice of the agency.

Recommendations

The writer would make the following recommendations for other attempting to develop a resource directory to enhance service provisions.

1. Development of potential solution strategies for the resource directory.
2. Assurance that the county agency staff are provided with definitions of all terms used during feedback evaluation to assure that all parties are "speaking the same language".

It is clear, as a result of the outcomes, that the identification of improvement areas and even the provision of additional information regarding the improvement opportunity does not insure the agency will follow through with recommendations. Therefore, it seems that a plan needs to be developed the process of achieving an outcome.

Providing the county agency staff without the definitions of what constituted administrative code compliance and practice recommendations would have potentially increased consistency in the outcomes.

Dissemination

The writer as part of the practicum process shared the results in a unit staff meeting with the six colleagues who provided input for the colleague input surveys. The writer's supervisor suggested that the writer coordinate with the clerical support staff a means to keep the resource directory up to date with the current practice issues. Additionally, the writer's supervisor remarked that she would pursue the status of the agency receiving journal subscriptions as they had elapsed. Several of the writer's colleagues expressed interest in locating particular information within the resource directory. One colleague even contacted the writer at home trying to locate research of a particular subject.

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APPENDIX A

IMPROVING TECHINICAL ASSISTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Appendix A

Improving Technical Assistance Supervision Recommendations

Least Most

How important is administrative code (AC) compliance?

1 2 3 4 5

How important are practice recommendations?

1 2 3 4 5

How important is having available resources to support AC compliance?

1 2 3 4 5

How important is having resources to support practice recommendations?

1 2 3 4 5

1= not important
2= limited importance
3= neutral importance
4= somewhat important
5= very important

Rank the concrete resources available to assist in AC compliance recommendations?

1 2 3 4 5

Note: Concrete available in writing at the district office

Rank the concrete resources available to assist in practice recommendations?

1 2 3 4 5

Note: Concrete available in writing at the district office

1= unavailable/inadequate
2=limited availability/limited adequacy
3=neutral availability/adequacy
4=somewhat available/somewhat adequate
5=very available/very adequate

APPENDIX B

SUPERVSION RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENTATION

Practicum I
Appendix B
Supervision Recommendations Documentation

Type of Contact

____Child fatality
____Constituent Complaint
____Agency Visit
____Telephone Consultation

____Case Record Review

ID Information

County_____
Date_____
Agency Staff _____
State Staff_____
Case Name_____

Basic Case Information/Issues

___Administrative Code Compliance

____Practice Recommendations

Practice Recommendation Addresses the Following Information (At least one area needed)
____The correlation between research/ risk factors/ and increased risk predication
____The link between supervision & quality assurance activities & consistency in practice
____The link between training and consistency in risk assessment
____Utilizing risk assessment to guide decisions - not post decision
____Utilizing the Risk Assessment Field Guide as the basis for identifying risk
____Cultural considerations in risk assessment

Provided copy of _____ to the county agency

APPENDIX C

SUPERVISION RECOMMENDATIONS SURVEY

Supervision Recommendations Survey

In how many cases were the supervision recommendation helpful?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

In how many cases were the supervision recommendation inclusive of administrative code compliance information and case practice information ?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

In how many cases were the supervision recommendation incorporated into practice on individual cases?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

In how many cases were the supervision recommendation incorporated in the overall practice of the agency?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

In how many cases were the recommendations utilized to date?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

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APPENDIX D

POST IMPLEMENTATION

IMPROVING TECHINICAL ASSISTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

COLLEAGUE INPUT SURVEY

Appendix D

Post Implementation

Improving Technical Assistance Supervision Recommendations

Colleague Input Survey

Why do you or do you not think that administrative code compliance recommendations are important?

_____

_____

Why do you or do you not think that practice recommendations are important?

_____

_____

Why do you or do you not think that having available resources to support administrative code compliance recommendations is important?

_____

_____

Why do you or do you not think that having resources available to support practice recommendations is important?

_____

_____